



Conference Committee What? Where? When? ...

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Why?



Basic Rules

- **Treat as two separate committees**
- **“Reasonable” Notice**
- **Stick to Conferenceable Items**
- **Report is a simple yes or no vote - NO floor amendments**
- **Public Testimony not necessary**

³⁵Br**eaking** the Rules

What are the consequences?

Setting Precedent!

It is unlikely that breaking Uniform Rules will adversely affect your bill in the long run

³⁵Br**eaking** the Rules

Questions to consider:

- **Why does the rule exist?**
- **What process or group is it protecting?**
- **How does it help?**
- **Who does it hurt/disenfranchise?**
- **Can we accomplish the goals without it?**

³⁵Br**eaking** the Rules

If you must:

- **Suspend the fewest rules.**
- **Try to honor the intent.**
- **Clearly explain so that the precedent is narrow and members and public understand.**



Conference Committee Powers



Three Types of Conference Committees:

- 1. Conference Committee**
- 2. Conference Committee with Limited Powers of Free Conference**
- 3. Free Conference Committee**



Conference Committee – multiple choice

Choose between conferenceable sections of final house and senate bills.

Entire bill section as it appeared in one of the final bills must be included verbatim.

What is conferenceable?

- ✓ **A section that is different in the final bills.**
- ✓ **A section that was in one bill but not in the other.**

What is NOT conferenceable?

- × **Identical in both final bills – cannot be removed and must be included verbatim.**
- × **Did not appear in either final bill – cannot be added.**



Conference Committee with Limited Powers of Free Conference – it's complicated

Choose between conferenceable sections of final house and senate bills.

Presiding Officers can grant the power to amend specific conferenceable items.

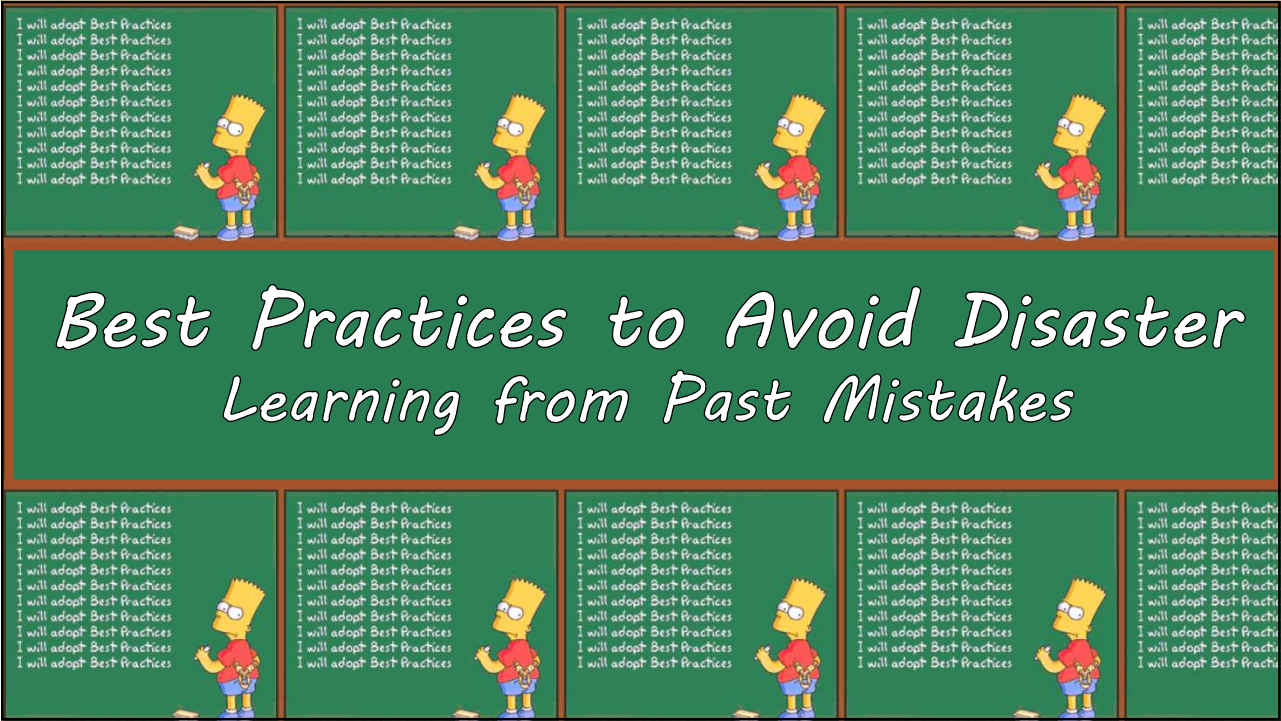
Limited to amending those sections for which powers have been granted.



Free Conference Committee – choose your own adventure

Can contain any language that is “germane,” which has been very broadly interpreted.

Simply: can rewrite the whole bill as long as it still meets Constitutional single subject rule.



Know your bill and don't rush!

Know the sticking points and players.

Identify a path forward – figure out the powers needed, preferably before the committee is appointed.

A person can only serve on one conference committee for a bill.

Better to take a moment to figure it out than get left out at the end.



Know where you're going!



Requests for Limited Powers must be in writing and specific.

Report is an up or down vote on the floor; no amendments or “last-minute” fixes.

Therefore, conference committees tend to be tightly scripted and the path forward should be decided before the meeting.

Whenever possible, use a CS!

Allowing folks to read the changes IN CONTEXT avoids misunderstandings and technical errors that can lead to delays.



Make sure all negotiators have signed off on the actual language.



MY BOSS IS CHAIRING A CONFERENCE COMMITTEE – NOW WHAT?
Maybe you're expecting this - your bill got a "poison pill" in the other body that your boss won't

10. Meeting prep. For staff that has run a committee previously, meeting prep is very similar. CCS generally don't include sponsor statements or the original backup materials in the bill package.

12 step process to getting prepared.

not yet appointed, you don't actually have a committee to chair.

2. Check in with the Senate Secretary or Chief Clerk's office to get the official documents.

3. Get familiar with the bill and create a quick reference (comparison document or list of conferenceable items) to help others get up to speed. Don't assume that other members were appointed due to their knowledge of the bill. Identify the "conferenceable" items and stakeholders.

4. Identify your counterpart in the other body and touch base. While the houses may be at loggerheads and the bosses may be taking tough negotiating stances, it is up to the staff to make sure that the committee runs smoothly. Communication is key.

- If you are producing materials on behalf of the committee, be sure that both the chairs are aware and have signed off on the documents.
- Make sure that you both have posting rights to the committee side document system. You may have to post something at midnight. Don't wait until your boss is waiting for something to get posted to call it!

5. Identify and contact your records secretary – you can't have a meeting without one.

6. Make an email and phone list – include all legislators on the committee (for teleconferencing), the sponsor of the bill (if it's not you), and the other body. Get cell numbers if you can.

7. Make nameplates (I find it easier to have my own for the pages to bring them), create some letterhead, and send out meeting notice. Might as well be ready.

8. When a deal is near, your boss to create and distribute a draft CCS to the stakeholders. Have your boss create a sectional or add the bill to the comparison document, if appropriate.

If the committee has a path forward, draft a script and any necessary materials, such as a letter requesting limited powers or a letter requesting the committee be discharged. For either of these letters, you need to have two original copies to be signed by committee members – one for the Senate President and one for the Speaker of the House. There are templates for scripts and letters on Legal's website.

11. Confirm with your boss and the other chair what materials, if any, should be included with the Conference Committee Report to the other body. Make the arrangements to have these distributed.

12. If the floor session is waiting for the committee report:

- Give legal a heads up when the meeting is done and that you'll be calling for the report. If the committee is done, you can ask that the CCS be delivered to the Senate Secretary's or Chief Clerk's office and wait for it there.
- If a compromise bill is going to change the fiscal note, consider giving the Governor's Legislative Liaison's office an advance copy of the CCS or a verbal heads up about the provisions that will cause a fiscal note change and make sure someone is standing by to get the new fiscal note uploaded.
- Inform your Presiding Officer's office when the meeting is over.

Go directly to the Senate Secretary or Chief Clerk's office with the signed documents and wait for your CCS.

Don't try to read this tiny font, I'll send you a copy. Seriously.

Key Principals of CC Staffing

- ✓ **Know the bill!**
- ✓ **Create backup to explain the bill and the Conference CS to others.**
- ✓ **It takes a village - communicate with: the other Chair's staff, committee members, Presiding Officers, Legal, the Secretary/Clerk, records, teleconferencing, and the Governor's Legislative Liaison office, as appropriate.**